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METROPOLIS CULTURE AND THE ALARMING GROWTH OF MATERIALISM IN INDIA

Dr. James Morely M.A. Eng.Lit., M.Ed. Ph.D

British Institute of English, N.R Pet, Eluru, Andhra Pradesh

Abstract: The study is a critical analysis on the growing trends in the metropolis culture in the country. Metropolis culture is marked by the philosophy of materialism. The ethical and moral values that India of the ancient days had upheld are eroding in the modern times especially in the metropolises. Large scale migration from within the country to metropolises, the movements like feminism, emancipation of women and empowerment of women have contributed to the alarming growth of materialism in the country.

Keywords: Materialism, Utilitarianism, Rent-a-womb, Biological-mother, Surrogate-mother, Mother-by-contract, Gestational Carrier, Baby-outsourcing, Catholicism, Hymenoplasty.

A large city which has become an important centre for economic, political,

and cultural activities over a period of time, in a country or region can be called as a Metropolis. The metropolises are always busy with national or international connections and communications. The Census Commission of India defines metropolis, as a city having a population of over four million.¹ Mumbai, Delhi, Bangalore, Hyderabad, Ahmedabad, Chennai, Kolkata, Surat, and Pune are the top-ten metropolitan cities in India.

As the years pass and as science and technology advance more and more of the global population move to cities and as an after effect, the cities start growing to become metropolises. The United Nations has made its observation and prediction, regarding the growth of the city in 2016 in its data booklet, as follows: "Between 2016 and 2030, the population in all city size classes is projected to increase, while the rural population is projected to decline slightly. While rural areas were home to more than 45 per cent of the world's population in 2016, that proportion is expected to fall to 40 per cent by 2030."²

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The tendency to migrate to mega cities for better living standards is a common trend in every country. Therefore migration takes place both within the country and out of the country. According to the statistics of The United Nations, India has outdone other countries with regard to migration. The number of Indian-born persons residing abroad numbered 17 million in 2017, ahead of the number of Mexican-born persons living outside Mexico (13 million). The Russian Federation, China, Bangladesh, Syrian Arab Republic and Pakistan and Ukraine also have large migrant populations living abroad, ranging from 6 to 11 million each.³

Indian metropolises have grown in a similar manner as people keep on migrating for better job opportunities. Moreover it has become a matter of pride to live in megacities especially among the people of remote Indian villages. In the year 2011 in the book named 'Indian Cities Managing Urban Growth' published by 'Metropolis'—an association of major metropolises in the world presided by Chris Johnson, makes its observation as given below.

“India is in a major phase of urbanisation. No matter which figures you select, the urban population growth projections are incredible. In a 2006 report, India's Registrar General suggested

a rise of 248 million people living in cities between 2001 and 2026. The 2010 McKinsey Global Institute Report on 'India's Urban Awakening' suggests a rise of 250 million citizens between 2008 and 2030. That means between 10 million and 11.4 million new people to be accommodated in Indian cities every year. This requires major planning and intense government focus at national, state and city level.”⁴

The exploding growth of population in cities year by year, brings a host of other problems related to housing, pollution, congestion, health and hygiene, poverty and the like, along with it. Every City in the world faces similar issues but this study is not focussing on the issues mentioned above. Its focus is on the philosophy of materialism and utilitarianism that has transformed the attitudes of people in India in the modern times. India of the ancient days was known to be 'rich in spirituality' India of Mahatma Gandhi was known for 'simple living and high thinking'. But today things have changed especially in our metropolises and even in smaller cities. My attempt is to analyse the distortion that has happened to some of the moral principles which India had upheld in the past.

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The Philosophy of Materialism represents the tendency that seeks to reduce the higher to the lower or explain the higher phenomena in the light of the lower ones.⁵ Materialists deny the spiritual explanations for the things in this world and they uphold the worldly values and the life in the present. Amassing wealth, struggling for stardom and indulging in sensuous pleasures are given great importance by them. Social services are done with the aim of earning fame by the practitioners of materialism. ‘Eat, drink and be merry’ is the doctrine advocated by the Indian materialistic school of philosophy known as the Charvakas. They do not believe in Life after Death, Soul or God and as death is the end, enjoy life that is the present. Whatever is known by sense perception in the physical world is real and metaphysical realities are beyond sense perception and so they are unknown and uncertain, therefore they are unreal.

Utilitarianism is also a materialistic school philosophy from the West and it was propagated by Jeremy Bentham. This school of thought propagates the application of ‘the principle of utility’ to approve or disapprove an action. The goal for human beings is to maximise pleasure and minimise pain. The word ‘utility’ has many connotations like profit, benefit, advantage, pleasure, happiness and goodness as per their view.

By ‘the principle of utility’ is meant, the principle that approves or disapproves of every action according to the tendency it appears to have to increase or lessen—i.e. to promote or oppose—the happiness of the person or group whose interest is in question.” ...By ‘utility’ is meant the property of something whereby it tends to produce benefit, advantage, pleasure, good, or happiness (all equivalent in the present case) or (this being the same thing).⁶

Accordingly, today most people are on the lookout for maximising pleasure and minimising pain in every area of life. Let us look at a few concepts that has lost its original meaning because of the materialistic outlook towards life.

Motherhood

Human beings are welcomed and accepted to this world through the glorious phenomenon of motherhood, which has different stages like conjugal love and relationship, conception, fertilisation, antenatal care, postnatal care and child rearing designed by the Creator. Motherhood reminds us of the noble value of living for others while taking pain on ourselves. A mother in the ancient days did

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imbibes the emotions and thoughts of love & care of the mother? What kind of a child will she give birth to?" Asks Veena Kohli President, All India Women's Conference. What type of attitude will this children have towards life, family and society?⁷

Femininity and Masculinity

The terms Femininity and Masculinity have lost their traditional meaning in the modern culture because of the materialistic and utilitarian philosophy of life that people follow in metropolises. There is no reason to be surprised about it because cities grow to metropolises mainly by migration and those who migrate to cities migrate for better living standards and material prosperity and not for any spiritual reasons. Many who had been orthodox and adhered to moral values when they were in their native villages, shun the same as and when they migrate to metropolises. In the race for material wealth, they either conveniently ignore or are situationally forced leave all those values that they had followed once. In the new surroundings, once detestable behaviours like deceitfulness, treachery, debauchery and so on are justified because they are all part of the struggle for fame, wealth and money.

'Femininity' traditionally meant having qualities like affection, gentleness, empathy, humility, sensitivity and soft-spoken but today femininity has become almost identical with appearance of a beautiful woman; having flowing hair, flawless skin, a narrow waist, bulging breasts and little or no body hair or facial hair. This new image of femininity was created in the minds of people mainly by advertisers of toiletries, cosmetics, jewellery and lingerie. And the traditional attributes of femininity has almost been replaced with smartness, strength, outspokenness, independence. Some women even go to the extent of thinking that choosing to remain unmarried and not bearing children are part of their feminine-freedom and forcing them to lead a married life is considered to be an act of intrusion into their personal freedom.

The traits traditionally viewed of masculinity were strength, courage, independence, violence and assertiveness. Today's materialistic culture has a different connotation for words 'masculinity' or 'manliness'. Vikram Chandra an Indo-American novelist in his novel 'Sacred Games' which narrates the aspirations and struggles of migrants to the metropolitan city of Mumbai, has brought it out through a conversation between two of his dramatis personae. Juliet Mascarenes a migrant-woman who is an epitome of feminine freedom asks her friend Ganesh

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Gaitonde the Villain of the novel, “Gaitonde, you fool, you think she was some virgin you impressed with your huge manliness.”⁸ Here, the word ‘manliness’ does not denote its traditional meaning but it refers to his phallus. In the metropolis culture manliness refers to the size and strength of the body, its chiseled out abdominal muscles and other big and well-built parts of it, and in a very special way the phallus. This image too has been drawn mainly by the Bollywood movies and advertisers of men’s products.

People with the materialistic attitude try to justify their actions from the materialistic view point and they reduce the higher to the lower. The novel ‘Sacred Games’ has delineated how in real life some migrants in their pursuit for stardom and wealth reduce human sexuality to means of making quick-money or to a machine for deriving immoral pleasures through the characters of Jojo and Gaitonde. Jojo when fed up with men enjoys her sexuality singly with her vibrator. Gaitonde when fed up with all sorts of woman of different region and religion, language and culture seeks to keep virgins with himself for long. He spends many hours of his time searching the internet for finding a solution for enhancing the length and girth of his small-sized phallus for the purpose of impressing the woman whom he has kept for his sexual gratifications.

Virginit

Virginit as we know, is the state of a human being who has never engaged in sexual intercourse. Although Virginit, can be said of both males and females it is primarily attached to the personal purity of women. In every religion and culture it has great importance, as most males desire to marry only virgins. In the flesh trade of metropolises virgins are in good demand and huge sums of money are involved in it. Unruptured hymen is the proof for the sexual purity of a woman. Procurers and procuresses earn a lot of money by supplying girls and when they do not have virgins in their bevy they resort to recreating virginit. In the novel *Sacred Games*, another migrant woman named Jamila, who had lost her virginit by giving into prostitution for survival in her early days in Mumbai, recreates it by undergoing hymenoplasty and makes a lot of money from Ganesh Gaitonde the villain. Then, when she wanted to be a celebrity in Bollywood goes through many cosmetic surgeries in one go to get a new sexy, curvy and buxom appearance.

When human body and its sexuality is being reduced to mere objects for making money, deriving pleasures and enhancing its appearance, in materialism, we do have Catholicism diametrically opposing this view. The Bible teaches thus; “Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from

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God, and that you are not your own?"⁹ The Catholic view point places human sexuality in a noble realm, it is not merely an act of mating for procreation it is much nobler as Lopez Trujillo, Alfonso Card the President of Pontifical Council for Family in the Catholic Church, observes.

Man is called to love and to self-giving in the unity of body and spirit. Femininity and masculinity are complementary gifts, through which human sexuality is an integrating part of the concrete capacity for love which God has inscribed in man and woman. "Sexuality is a fundamental component of personality, one of its modes of being, of manifestation, of communicating with others, of feeling, of expressing and of living human love". This capacity for love as self-giving is thus "incarnated" in the nuptial meaning of the body, which bears the imprint of the person's masculinity and femininity.

The human body, with its sex, and its masculinity and femininity, seen in the very mystery of creation, is not only a source of fruitfulness

and procreation, as in the whole natural order, but includes right from the beginning' the nuptial' attribute, that is, the capacity of expressing love: that love precisely in which the man-person becomes a gift and — by means of this gift — fulfils the very meaning of his being and existence."¹⁰

Human sexuality and the difference in it i.e. masculinity and femininity are to be respected and loved. The person of a sex becomes a gift for the person of other sex in love and giving in the union of marriage. Sexuality is for expressing love and not for mere pleasuring and never for earning. Without a dedicated love in the union of marriage, sex is only a sinful pleasuring which reduces it to that of animal sexuality where it is intended only for procreation and no love involved. In the materialistic culture the nobility of human sexuality is reduced to animal mating.

Conclusion

By and large, the modern Indian culture has been highly influenced by materialistic-utilitarian philosophy but its impact is more visible in the metropolises. In our country we do not have many examples of simplicity, spirituality and altruism in real life, like Mahatma Gandhi, Mother Teresa and Abdul Kalam. We find

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such heroes only in our Panchatantra, mythology and Indian Cinemas. In the panic pursuit for materialistic goals many of our heroes, celebrities and gurus in different walks of life turn out to be looters, murderers and traitors who easily escape the clutches of the law.

Studies on modern Indian society proves that marriage and motherhood are losing its divinity and traditional values, divorcees and unmarried singles are on the rise. These days many people opt to stay single, for fear of being dominated or losing the so called personal freedom. Marriage and family life become successful only when there is selfless love and sacrifice but they are contradictory to the principles of materialism and utilitarianism. The Holy Bible has defined love as follows;

“Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonour others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails...”¹¹

Along with Materialism the movements like feminism and emancipation of women and empowerment of women have greatly contributed to these emerging trends in the country.

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